

# JUDICIARY TIMES



5<sup>th</sup> ASIA-PACIFIC JUDICIAL  
COLLOQUIUM

LITIGATION  
CONFERENCE 2019

FAMILY CONFERENCE  
2019: SUPPORTING,  
HEALING &  
RECONSTRUCTING

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# 5<sup>th</sup> ASIA-PACIFIC JUDICIAL COLLOQUIUM

The biennial event was attended by Chief Justices and Judges from the apex courts of Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Singapore. They had congregated at the Supreme Court of Singapore for a frank, open and rich discussion on issues centred on court administration and recent development in the law of contract and equitable compensation, as well as current issues in Public and International Law.

Some of the topics discussed at the colloquium included - Civil Justice Reforms, Maintaining the Dignity of the Court in the Face of Criticism, Contractual Interpretation, Equitable Compensation for Breach of Fiduciary Duty, Climate Change and the Law, as well as the Hague Convention and Transnational Custody Disputes.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Judicial Colloquium commenced with a welcome reception on the evening of 27 May at the Supreme Court and concluded with a social programme on 30 May at Jewel Changi Airport for all participants and accompanying spouse.



## LITIGATION CONFERENCE 2019

*“There is a need for change to the civil justice system to ensure that Singapore continues to remain a first class system”*

Senior Minister of State for Law and Health Edwin Tong, SC

The Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Law Society of Singapore organised the Litigation Conference 2019, held on 22 and 23 April at the Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre.

The focus of the Litigation Conference 2019 was the proposed reforms to the civil justice system and the new Rules of Court.

The event was attended by more than 300 participants from the legal community, with close to two-thirds of the attendees being lawyers who had been in practice for less than five years.

In his keynote address, Senior Minister of State for Law and Health Edwin Tong, SC stated that the growth of a successful Bar is a key area of concern for the Ministry of Law. He addressed some of the challenges relating to the legal profession, such as technology, globalisation and those that were more specific to the younger generation of lawyers, i.e. training, high attrition rate, and in respect of the civil justice proposals, the possibility of a reduction in opportunities for advocacy.

Mr Tong also highlighted the initiatives by the Ministry of Law that were aimed at helping lawyers to make the practice of law viable and fulfilling.

The two-day conference featured seven plenary sessions that provided a platform for judges, lawyers, academics and other members of the legal profession to gather and share their views on the significant changes to the litigation process and how this would transform the practice of civil litigation in Singapore.



Photo courtesy of the Law Society of Singapore



The Litigation Conference 2019 covered the following topics:

- Civil Justice Reform – Win or Lose?
- The Future of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Singapore
- Pre-Trial I: Pleadings, Case Management Conference, Single Interlocutory Application
- Pre-Trial II: Discovery, Factual & Expert Witness Statement
- The Trial
- New Rules, Same Pains: Challenges Faced by the Young Lawyer (litigator)
- Costs

Panellists from the Supreme Court and the State Courts were:

- Justice See Kee Oon
- Justice Chua Lee Ming
- Justice Kannan Ramesh
- Judicial Commissioner Ang Cheng Hock
- Principal District Judge Thian Yee Sze
- Principal District Judge James Leong
- District Judge Lim Wee Ming
- District Judge Chiah Kok Khun

## FAMILY CONFERENCE 2019: SUPPORTING, HEALING & RECONSTRUCTING

Following the inaugural Family Conference in 2018, the Family Conference returned for its second year on 3 and 4 July. Attended by close to 250 delegates, this year's Family Conference was brought together by the Family Law Practice Committee, Probate Practice and Succession Planning Committee and the Muslim Law Practice Committee of the Law Society of Singapore.

To give a holistic and multi-faceted view on the Family Practice, the two-day Conference encompassed both specialised panel sessions as well as smaller workshops to discuss various issues pertaining to Family Law with practitioners of all seniority levels.

Expanding on the theme of 'Supporting, Healing and Reconstructing', experts and professionals spoke on a range of diverse and important issues, including safety in relationships, parental alienation, estate planning, mental capacity issues, mental health issues in practice, comparative review on jurisdictional issues in the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and Syariah Court, and practical knowledge like improving court craft skills.

The keynote speaker for the Conference, Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, called on family lawyers to do all they could to equip themselves with the right skills in order to assist their clients who are going through divorce to see beyond their own needs or anger.

***“Our aspiration as a society is to support every family towards a way forward. This means recasting the family's future, for the past may contain pain and perceived failures. We, as legal professionals, can give them hope for a positive future.”***

Justice Debbie Ong,  
Presiding Judge of the FJC



To that end, Justice Ong suggested some useful starting points. First, Love the Law. Her Honour shared that family law is rich in doctrinal issues and has much legal and inter-disciplinary jurisprudence as well as international law. Second, Good Advocacy. Highlighting the important role of lawyers, good advocacy would assist the Court and thus help parties to reach an outcome expeditiously. Third, Good Decorum and Etiquette. Her Honour highlighted that the way parties conduct themselves has an impact on the parties' respect for court orders and proceedings. Accordingly, senior lawyers must nurture younger lawyers in this aspect. Reflecting on the impact on the lives of litigants, Her Honour added that family lawyers could be the hand that pulls a drowning family member to safety.

In line with the theme of the Conference, Justice Ong went on to point out that family practice today has features that are supporting, healing, and reconstructing. In the area of Divorce & Children, where the child's welfare is paramount and where harmonious resolution is the ultimate aim, the simplified divorce track should be the natural path. The core features of the simplified divorce track include mediation and agreements, with less or no adversarial litigation, and practices

which are multidisciplinary and judge-led. In her speech, Justice Ong also touched on the Mental Capacity Act, which not only aims for simplified processes for deputyship to support family members trying to care for elderly persons, but also ensures safeguards to protect against potential abuse by deputies of vulnerable adults.

In concluding her keynote address, Justice Ong reiterated that the practice of family law was not easy and that FJC would be conducting focus group discussions with lawyers to better understand their challenges and obtain their feedback. Echoing her speech made at the FJC Workplan Seminar 2018, Justice Ong emphasised that “Today is a new day” regardless of the challenges that all family law practitioners face.

The Family Conference 2019 was strongly supported by the FJC with many of its judges fielded as moderators and speakers for diverse topics such as therapeutic justice, mental capacity, enforcement of Syariah Court Orders in the FJC, and Youth Court issues. Delegates also had the opportunity to network with fellow practitioners, other distinguished panellists as well as speakers to exchange insights and knowledge for their practice.



Photo courtesy of the Law Society of Singapore

## HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Technology continues to allow the expansion of knowledge exchange as the State Courts and their counterparts from the Administrative Courts of Thailand conducted a cross-border video-conference workshop on 27 May. The workshop saw both countries sharing their knowledge, experience and new legislations in the area of Court Dispute Resolution (CDR).

From Singapore, District Judge Carrie Chan spoke about how the use of CDR advances the delivery of justice and shared the framework employed, and tools used in the State Courts while Principal District Judge Thian Yee Sze elaborated on the CDR modality.

From Thailand, Judge Boonanan Wannapanit from the Supreme Administrative Court, shared their recent introduction of mediation, while Judge Srunyoo Potiratchatangkoon shared about the pilot project on the use of mediation in the Songkhla Administrative Court.

The workshop was broadcast to more than 200 judges and court administrators from the regional and central Administrative Courts located in 14 different sites in Thailand. In an era of digitalised court administration, this workshop marked the second cross-border collaboration between the Singapore and Thailand courts.



## FJC'S FAMILY JUDGES' LEARNING WEEK 2019



The FJC held its inaugural family judges' Learning Week from 15 to 19 July at Hotel Fort Canning. The objective was to set aside an intensive training week for family judges, dedicated to learning and building up core knowledge and competencies to be effective and efficient family judges, as part of a specialised family judges' curriculum.

The programme for Learning Week was specially curated to reflect the unique and multi-disciplinary nature of family judges' work. The programme covered both legal and non-law social science topics, as well as skills-based training. Justice Quentin Loh gave an enlightening and entertaining session on judicial temperament and communications in court. Other trainers invited were experts in the respective fields, such as expert child psychiatrists Prof Daniel Fung and A/Prof Mary Daniel, child developmental psychologist Dr Yang Phey Hong, MSF psychologist Jennifer Teoh, family sociologists Prof Stella Quah and Dr Mathew Mathews, and legal experts Prof Leong Wai Kum and Professor Tang Hang Wu.

These specialist trainers covered topics such as changing "family" norms, the "child's best interests" principle from the perspective of

social science, factors impacting a child's development and needs at different developmental stages; common child outcomes related to various types of adverse experience; challenges, skills and techniques in interviewing children and how to prepare for the interview and the types of questions to ask, judged case management, why some marriages work and some fail and

what couples go through in divorce therapy, and judicial awareness and self-care.

Besides Presiding Judge Debbie Ong, Judicial Commissioner Tan Puay Boon and FJC Judicial Officers, Judge of Appeal Judith Prakash and Justice Pang Khang Chau also attended and participated in selected sessions, along with 35 to 40 participants.



## FUNDRAISING CARNIVALS BY THE SINGAPORE COURTS

As part of their corporate social responsibility efforts to reach out to the less privileged members of society, the Singapore Courts organised carnivals to raise funds for various charities.

On 14 August, the FJC held its inaugural My Happifamily bazaar to raise funds for Food from the Heart, an independent non-profit organisation that feeds the less privileged through its food distribution programme. Food from the Heart is the FJC and the Supreme Court's adopted charity of three years.

In addition to participating in nostalgic games and purchasing homemade cakes and local food, some bazaar-goers contributed up to \$50 to watch special performances by The Frat Pack - a musical group comprising judges and court administrators of the FJC. The FJC raised more than \$12,000 through the My Happifamily bazaar.

It was a similar atmosphere at the State Courts on 16 Aug. The State Courts Atrium transformed into a marketplace for carnival goods, and multiple game booths were set up on level nine. Some of these games were improvised and handcrafted by staff members, just for this special occasion.

The State Courts raised a total of \$56,000 in support of various charity organisations of which \$40,000 was earmarked for their adopted charity, the Singapore After-Care Association, a key aftercare agency providing welfare and rehabilitation services for discharged offenders and their families.

The Supreme Court's charity bazaar will be in September.



## STATE COURTS REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY



The State Courts continued to be ambassadors of corporate giving through various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities that were organised this year. These activities included special events organised for their adopted charity, the Singapore After-Care Association (SACA), and other programmes that raised community awareness and encouraged the spirit of volunteerism among staff.

On 24 April, a special movie screening of Marvel's Avengers: Endgame, was organised at Golden Village, Great World City to raise funds to support SACA. A total of \$9,010 was raised through the sale of movie tickets and cash donations by State Courts' staff.

As advocates of volunteerism, four staff members volunteered as Silver Generation Ambassador (SGA) Buddies, in support of Public Service Cares (PS Cares). On 14 June, they accompanied the SGAs on their home visits and interacted with the elderly who live alone, offering company as well as helping to communicate the relevant policies and support available to the elderly in Singapore.

A month later, about 20 volunteers comprising State Courts' staff and their family members participated in SACA's Family Day held in Sentosa. They helped participants create meaningful designs reflecting their family bond, values and love on tote bags.



On 25 July, nearly 90 staff members spent their lunchtime reading in support of the Read for Books Charity Drive, which was part of the National Reading Movement 2019 to raise awareness and share the gift of reading with the less privileged - for every 10 people who read for 15 minutes, one book would be donated to selected beneficiaries. With a total reading time of 3,135 minutes, the State Courts contributed 20 books to the cause.



## STATE COURTS STRIVE FOR A DIGITAL-READY WORKFORCE

In line with the government's Smart Nation objectives, the State Courts kicked off a series of data science capability development programmes on 6 June to build a digital and data literate State Courts workforce by 2023.

The "Have Fun with Data" learning workshop featured guest speakers Mr Kelvin Goh from GovTech and Mr Alvin Pang from Tableau who shared how data analytics and visualisation can be applied both at work and at home. Mr Goh shared how data analytics was used to identify a rogue train which resulted in massive train delays along the Circle Line in 2016 while Mr Pang related his personal experience in using data visualisation to understand the primary school registration exercise.

The participants also learned from their own at the workshop. Principal Director Toh Yung Cheong presented useful tips and illustrated the usefulness of pivot tables in Microsoft Excel and Power BI, a data visualisation tool that can be used to analyse data.



### eLearn2gether

As part of their efforts to develop a digital-ready workforce, the State Courts also implemented the "eLearn2gether" initiative to promote an e-learning culture as well as provide opportunities for their staff to acquire new skills. From August to December, staff would go through an online curriculum on data science and digital literacy using the Civil Service College's (CSC) LEARN<sup>Beta</sup> APP.

### LEARN<sup>Beta</sup> APP

The LEARN<sup>Beta</sup> APP is a whole-of-Government digital learning platform that allows users to learn anytime and anywhere, enabling them to upskill and adapt to the changing workplace. Through the App, users can discover a world of learning with the CSC's proprietary content and curated learning pathways from renowned third-party content providers.

The Singapore Courts have adopted the use of the LEARN<sup>Beta</sup> APP since it was first introduced in November 2018.



## FJC SOCIAL LEARNING VISIT TO GRACEHAVEN AND IMH

On 7 June, a group comprising judges and court administrators from the Family Justice Courts (FJC) visited Gracehaven and the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) to increase their knowledge of the social service sector and the mental health landscape.

Gracehaven is a residential home for children and youths who require care, protection and rehabilitation due to risk behaviours and a lack of parental supervision. IMH is an acute tertiary psychiatric hospital that offers a comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counselling services for children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly.

The group met with experts in the relevant fields, and learned about youth issues and mental health from them before they were brought on a tour.



1 - 4 APR 2019

### Judicial Officers visit the Myanmar Courts

District Judge Carrie Chan from the State Courts and District Judge Yarni Loi from the Family Justice Courts visited the Myanmar Courts from 1 to 4 April, to share their knowledge on court-annexed mediation.

The Myanmar Courts, which were implementing the Court-led Mediation Pilot Programme, learned about the evolution of mediation in Singapore, including the legal framework required, types of cases that are suitable, the role of counsellors and psychologists, and the enforceability of settlement agreements. The two judges also conducted a workshop on mediation and discussed their own experiences on court-annexed mediation.

The visit was part of the Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange (SMILE MOU), which was established to promote a better understanding of the laws, legal systems and institutions of both countries.



8 MAY 2019

### Court-to-Court Collaboration: Working Group to Develop Legal Infrastructure for the Belt and Road Initiative

On 8 May 2019, a working group co-chaired by Justice Steven Chong of the Supreme Court of Singapore and Vice President Yang Wanming of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China held its inaugural meeting in Beijing, China. The working group had a fruitful discussion on various matters, including the agenda for the Third Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable to be held in August 2019.

9 MAY 2019

### Visit by Vice Minister for Justice of China, Mr Xiong Xuanguo and Delegation

The Supreme Court hosted a visit by an eight-member delegation led by Vice Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China, Mr Xiong Xuanguo, on 9 May.

Besides a courtesy call on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, the officials were also given an overview of the judicial system, as well as the Judicial Insolvency Network and the Singapore International Commercial Court.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Vice Minister Xiong also discussed the legal and judicial cooperation between the two countries.



## NOTABLE VISITS

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**28 May & 19 Jun 2019****Foreign Officials visit the State Courts**

On 28 May and 19 June, judges, judicial officers and IT personnel from various countries including Egypt, India, Kazakhstan, Laos, and Qatar, visited the State Courts.

They learned about the use of court technologies and case management systems such as the Integrated Case Management System and the Community Justice and Tribunals System. The programme also included a tour of the State Courts, which showcased the courts' Automated Collection System and other IT facilities.

The visits were part of the Singapore Cooperation Programme jointly organised by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Singapore Judicial College.

**5 - 6 JUN 2019****Visit to Courts in Beijing and Shanghai**

Justice Aedit Abdullah led a six-member delegation to visit the Supreme People's Court Information Management Centre, Beijing Internet Court, Shanghai No. 2 Intermediate Court and Shanghai Financial Court from 5 to 6 June.

The delegates and their hosts exchanged ideas on the use of technology in courts, and discussed various topics including real-time applications, artificial intelligence and blockchain.

**7 JUN 2019****Visit by Officials from People's Republic of Bangladesh**

An 11-member delegation comprising government officials from the People's Republic of Bangladesh and officials from the Bangladesh High Commission in Singapore visited the Supreme Court on 7 June. Led by Bangladesh Cabinet Secretary, Mr Mohammad Shafiu Alam, the delegation was on a study visit to Singapore from 4 to 7 June. The visitors expressed an interest in carrying out an exchange on topics such as "technological developments for e-court optimisation" and the "advantages of e-reporting for efficiency in e-court", "e-courts records management", and "e-court case management system" among others. A briefing on "Court Technology and the e-Litigation System" was conducted for the delegation by Mr Santhanam Srinivasan, Chief Information Officer.

**9 JUL 2019****MOU for Cooperation with Kingdom of Morocco**

His Excellency the Chief Justice of Morocco, and President Delegate of the Supreme Council of the Judicial Power, Mostafa Faress called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon on 9 July and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation on judicial exchange, training and cooperation. This is the first MOU the Supreme Court of Singapore has inked with a North African state.

During his visit, His Excellency was given a tour of the Supreme Court and was briefed on the eLitigation system, court technology and the Singapore International Commercial Court. His Excellency also visited the Singapore International Arbitration Centre.

**25 JUL 2019****Visit to Nevada 8th Judicial District Court**

On 25 July, Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Ms Jennifer Marie visited the Eighth Judicial District Court, Clark County, Nevada, to learn about the use of the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) system. She called on Chief District Judge Linda Bell and Court Executive Officer Mr Steve Grierson. A demonstration on the ODR system was also provided by the manager of the Family Mediation Centre, Ms Linda Sayegh.

**5 - 8 AUG 2019**  
Attachment of Myanmar Judges to State Courts



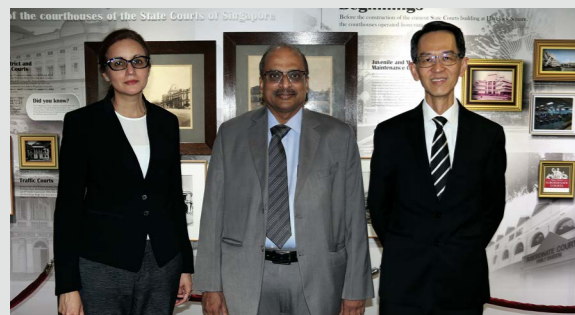
The State Courts hosted Deputy Township Judge, Hlaing Tharyar Township Court, Mr Ne Myo Aung, and Additional Township Judge, Aung Myay Tharzan Township Court Ms Su Thet Ngon, from the Supreme Court of the Union, Myanmar from 5 to 8 August.

The four-day attachment, which was part of the the Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange (SMILE MOU), included dedicated briefings on criminal proceedings, Alternative Dispute resolution and community justice. They also observed proceedings in court and in chambers.

**6 - 8 AUG 2019**  
Foreign Officials visit the Supreme Court and the State Courts

The Supreme Court and the State Courts received foreign officials from around the world who were in Singapore to attend the Singapore Convention signing ceremony and conference. Their visits provided the opportunity for the Singapore Courts to share the work of the judiciary, renew friendship and forge new ties.

**On 6 Aug at the State Courts**



The Honourable Justice B. Rejendran of India (centre)

**On 8 Aug at the State Courts**



The Honourable Acting Chief Justice of Fiji, Kamal Kumar (centre left) and Puisne Judge and Chief Registrar Judiciary of Fiji, Yohan Liyanage (far right)

**On 8 Aug at the Supreme Court**



The Honourable Acting Chief Justice of Fiji, Kamal Kumar



The Honourable Acting Chief Justice of Samoa, Vui Clarence Nelson



Minister of Justice of Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Seyed Ali Reza Avae



President of The Court of Appeal of Rwanda, Dr Aimé Muyoboke Karimunda

# COURT DISPUTE RESOLUTION FOR NEGLIGENCE CLAIMS

From 1 July, claims in negligence (including professional negligence) filed in the State Courts will be managed by the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution (SCCDR).

These cases will be automatically referred to the SCCDR for case management

- (a) from the filing of the Memorandum of Appearance in District Court cases; or
- (b) at the first Case Management Conference in Magistrate's Court cases.

The SCCDR will conduct case management for all negligence claims including motor accident, personal injury, medical negligence and other forms of negligence claims (including professional negligence), and for motor accident and industrial accident claims that are filed in the High Court and transferred to the District Court.

As gatekeepers of the civil trial courts, the SCCDR will draw on its toolbox of case management strategies comprising neutral evaluation, mediation and conciliation, and recommend the appropriate court dispute resolution mechanism that would enable parties to resolve their dispute expeditiously and amicably, without going for trial.



For more information, visit [bit.ly/2019PD5](http://bit.ly/2019PD5)



# EARLY ENGAGEMENT OF OFFENDERS BELOW 21 YEARS OLD

The State Courts commenced the pilot run of the Early Engagement of Offenders Below 21 Years Old (EE21) initiative on 8 July.

The EE21 is a voluntary programme which seeks to take the courts' rehabilitative efforts for youthful offenders upstream by engaging youths as soon as after they first appear in court.

EE21 will provide:

- Educational support for youths who are interested in continuing their education
- Vocational training for youths who are interested in acquiring skills in order to find employment
- Pro-social and recreational activities to engage youths in constructive activities
- Housing support for youths who require a temporary place to stay
- Financial support for youths and their families who are facing financial difficulties and in need of social assistance

Youths and family members can approach the State Courts Centre for Specialist Services (CSS) to enquire about the programme.



## STATE COURTS PILOT THE FRIEND SCHEME

From 1 May, unrepresented litigants-in-person (LiPs) may apply for a family member, friend or volunteer to assist them in tribunal proceedings under the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD) Friend Scheme.

The pilot programme would allow disadvantaged LiPs, such as the illiterate, elderly and foreign workers to obtain assistance for administrative matters, interpretation and even emotional support in tribunal proceedings.

Under the programme, LiPs may only be assisted by one friend, family member or volunteer at all times during the proceedings. Legally qualified persons are not eligible for the scheme.



For more information, visit [bit.ly/CJTDfriend](http://bit.ly/CJTDfriend)



## STATE COURTS GAIN INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR EXCELLENT USE OF TECHNOLOGY



On 25 July at the National Association of Court Administration (NACM) Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Ms Jennifer Marie, received on behalf of the State Courts, the NACM/ Court Information Technology Officers Consortium Technology Award under the category Court Management: Digital Courts (Courts to Citizens), for their Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS).

The CJTS is an e-filing and case management system with e-resolution options for cases dealt with by the Community Justice and Tribunals Division.

About two months before, at the 5th Annual Singapore OpenGov Leadership Forum, the State Courts received the OpenGov Recognition of Excellence 2019 for their Intelligent Court Transcription System (iCTS). The iCTS is an automated real-time transcription system with a speech recognition engine that is trained in court-specific vocabulary and other domain-specific terms. It is currently piloted in two courtrooms in the State Courts.

These awards are a testament to State Courts' innovative use of information and communication technology to enhance access to justice and improve their services.



## COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE RECOGNISED AS STAR PARTNER

The Community Justice Centre (CJC) was awarded the Star Partner Award at the annual Public Sector Transformation Awards Ceremony, held at Gardens by the Bay on 19 July.

The Star Partner award recognises exemplary citizens, non-government organisations, or companies that had contributed to better outcomes for the Public Service, in terms of demonstrating a strong spirit of partnership with the nominating public agency, or as strong advocates for national initiatives.

Established in 2013, the CJC is an independent registered charity committed to ensuring that Litigants-in-Person (LiPs) have access to justice

through community partnership. It had collaborated with the Singapore Courts and other key justice stakeholders on various initiatives and programmes that include the Automated Court Documents Assembly Service to help LiPs prepare court documents for bankruptcy proceedings, publications like the Guidebook for Accused in Person (GAP), and support programmes such as the Friends of Litigant-in-Person (FLiP).

The CJC is the judiciary's star partner in engendering accessible justice that commands trust, respect and confidence.



## FAMILY JUSTICE PRACTICE FORUM 2019

**Family Justice - "It takes a global village"**  
**Date: 2 October 2019 • Venue: Supreme Court Auditorium**

The Family Justice Practice Forum (FJPF) this year brings an international perspective on the family justice eco-system and other emerging issues faced by jurisdictions around the world. FJPF 2019 promises to be an excellent platform where international and local experts from the legal, psychological and social science sectors will come together to articulate the challenges and think of solutions as a global village to holistically support families towards recovery and a fresh start.



## DIVORCE AND YOU

"Divorce and You" legal talk aims to help you understand the divorce process in our legal system and to know what avenues there are to help you and your loved ones through this difficult time.

**Dates of Upcoming Talks in 2019:**  
 • 27 Sep • 22 Nov

**Time:** 6.30pm - 8.00pm (registration starts at 6.00pm)

**Venue:** Law Society Pro Bono Services, 17 Phillip Street, #08-00, Grand Building, Singapore 048695

To register, please scan this QR Code or visit <https://tinyurl.com/yalcrcna>



## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH COURT AND CASE MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

Court and case management officers are an integral part of the judiciary. Their duties include processing of filings, fixing of hearings and assisting with the preparation of cases.

The Singapore courts have an annual combined caseload of more than 400,000. Therefore, these officers play a vital role in the smooth running of court operations, and the efficient and effective management of court cases.

In this issue, we interviewed **Jarinah Mustafa** from the Supreme Court, **Kasumawati Rifaie** from the State Courts and **Kee Peng Siang** from the Family Justice Courts, who collectively have over 50 years of experience working in the courts. Read on to find out about what they do.



*Jarinah Mustafa joined the Supreme Court in 1991, and is one of the longest serving officers in the Supreme Court.*



*Kasumawati Rifaie joined the then Subordinate Courts in 1998 and is the Outstanding Court Administrator (Gold) Award winner this year.*



*Kee Peng Siang joined the Family Justice Courts in 2015, and used to be a legal secretary at one of Singapore's largest law firms.*

### What do you do on a typical work day?

**Jarinah:** I manage civil cases in the Legal Directorate, specifically matters pertaining to shipping and insurance, intellectual property and information technology. I update the hearing outcomes and monitor the cases to completion. In addition to processing work items in the Integrated Electronic Litigation System (eLitigation), I also attend to queries by lawyers and Litigants-in-Person (LiPs).

**Kasumawati:** I work in a mentions court that hears traffic and Land Transport Authority regulatory offences. It is a fast-paced environment and it can get quite hectic as there are as many as 70 cases a day. I have to ensure that all documents are in order, and that all parties are present for their scheduled hearings. Thankfully, the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) makes it faster and easier for information to be uploaded, and tracked. Previously, everything was in hardcopy.

**Peng Siang:** My main responsibility is to manage the docket cases, which is a certain category of cases that are pending before the courts. I usually attend to the most urgent matters in the morning and ensure that the courtrooms that have been designated to hear cases are ready. I then carry out my duties, which also include managing correspondence and feedback received from parties.

### What are some of the challenges that you face?

**Kasumawati:** Managing people from all walks of life. I have to stay cool when parties are impatient, composed when they are anxious, and always professional.

**Jarinah:** It is especially challenging when communication breaks down, resulting in frustration or tension amongst parties. I have to remain calm while trying to seek a solution so as to avoid further aggravation. I must say that it requires me to think on my feet under pressure.

**Peng Siang:** I would say that it is an "art" to manage emotional and aggressive LiPs, and as the scenarios vary, handling each kind would require skillsets that are not necessarily taught in books. Due to the nature of cases that are heard at the FJC, I often have to deal with such LiPs.

### Have you encountered any unexpected incidents at work?

**Peng Siang:** An LiP was telling me how he felt about his case and all the difficulties that he was facing. I asked

if he needed some clarification on certain procedures, as I thought he had some trouble with the applications or filing of documents. However, I noticed that he was well-versed in court procedures and did not seem to have any issue. He left after speaking to me for approximately 45 minutes.

My takeaway from this experience is that it does not take a lot to provide good service. In this instance, all the LiP needed was a good listener. I am glad to be able to lend him a listening ear.

**Kasumawati:** A court user took a photograph of the judge presiding in court. He was caught doing so and both the judge and I were informed. When his case was mentioned, the judge asked him why he did so. He told everybody in open court that he had found her attractive and that he wanted to prove it to his friend. The judge was not at all amused and it was certainly one of the most awkward moments for me in court. The court user was also instructed to delete the photograph.

### What are the critical qualities that a court and case management officer should have?

**Jarinah:** As we interact and engage with people daily, a case management officer needs to have patience and empathy, especially in challenging situations. It also helps to be quick-witted and resourceful to be able to carry out the daily tasks smoothly.

**Kasumawati:** Apart from being meticulous and well-organised to handle and process cases efficiently, a court officer has to be able to multi-task, work well in a team environment and be resilient to the pressures of work.

### What keeps you going?

**Peng Siang:** I have a supportive and understanding team to work with through thick and thin. My colleagues never fail to encourage and motivate me.

**Jarinah:** The appreciation and positive feedback that I have received from court users not only give me assurance that I am doing my work well, they also warm my heart and motivate me to do even better.

**Kasumawati:** The thought that we all have a part to play in society drives me to always do my best. It helps that I have a great team at the workplace, and a supportive family at home. Knowing that they've got my back keeps me going.

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